RALPH V. MERRY

APPLYING PSYCOLOGICAL TESTS

TO THE DEAF-BLIND

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who remarked, after glancing at my N.E.A. pin, "Well, I always say everybody's got to be tortured somehow, and you teachers got the children to torture you, and I got fussy customers to torture me. But anyway, I'm thankful I got good feet!" But I've run on, as usual, over my space limits, I'm afraid, and as Ye Editor will probably cut some of this out, anyway, I'll just stop, and wish you all a good new term, Colleagues—the best you've ever had.

Applying Psychological Tests to the Deaf-Blind

By RALPH V. MERRY

THE successful education of several deaf-blind individuals has demonstrated that absence of vision and hearing does not necessarily imply feeblemindedness. It is reasonable to assume, however, that there are differences in native intelligence among the deaf-blind as well as among the physically normal. Not every child thus handicapped can become a Helen Keller even if it were possible to duplicate the favorable conditions which she enjoyed. The majority of the deaf-blind probably can profit by some form of special instruction, but if time and effort are to be conserved it is essential that the teacher have some knowledge of her pupil's capacities.

It is an extremely difficult task to estimate the intelligence of a deaf-blind child with any degree of fairness and accuracy. Teachers' judgments are not very satisfactory since they are apt to overrate the ability of their pupils, and existing mental measurements make no allowance for the double handicap of blindness and deafness. Some writers have urged that, because of this fact, psychological tests which have been designed for normal children should *never* be used with the deaf-blind or that, if used, their results should be taken "with several grains of salt."[1]

This is a sound point of view insofar as it relates to the purely quantitative aspects of mental measurement. It would be grossly unjust to assign a numerical intelligence quotient to a deaf-blind individual upon the basis of the few standardized tests which his handicap would permit him to take. Furthermore, the necessary changes in administering these tests would invalidate the usual method of scoring so that their values in the original scale would not be similar under these different conditions.

There is another and very important aspect of psychological testing, however, which does not seem to be realized generally. This is the "quality" or "type" of responses made by the subject to test situations which is often quite as significant as the passing or failing of the test itself. For example, how does the subject approach a problem when he understands what is to be done? Does he exhibit planning ability or does he attack the task in a haphazard manner? If he fails a test, what factors are responsible for his failure? Was it because he required more time than was allotted to that particular test, and if so, how much more

[1]Rouleau, Corinne Rocheleau and Mack, Rebecca, *The Teachers Forum*, III, January, 1931, p. 3.

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teach normal children, in order to be aware of the educational standards for such children. She should have, according to him, more adequate training for her special field, after she has acquired the general training required of every grade teacher, and a general acquaintance with the teaching of all handicapped children. He said moreover, that for special education teachers must have creative imagination. They must be artists, rather than artisans. He said many teachers were good artisans, but the artists are hard to find. (So we are artists, Colleagues! For we are all successful Special Education teachers, or we wouldn't keep our jobs.)

Dr. Coburn, superintendent of schools in Battle Creek, Mich., followed Dr. Elliott. He described the school for atypical children in Battle Creek. Eight hundred children go this school. One third are atypical. Two thirds are normal. There are gifted children, too. The program for normal children is used as a nucleus, and the flexibility of the program makes it possible to make the situation as normal as possible for all groups. As the Kellogg funds assist the state funds in providing for the school, there is money enough to maintain a staff of medical experts, psychiatrists and other specialists. Dr. Coburn said that while prevailing opinions differed as to the merits of centralization versus de-centralization, he had found that in schools like this Battle Creek school it was possible to make more adjustments to individual needs. Also it made a fine training center for teachers, and that, far from objecting to the presence of their children in a school for handicapped children, the parents of the normal children who attend the school are delighted to have their children in this modern, well equipped building.

Dr. Meta Anderson, Director of Special Schools in Newark, N. J., spoke next, and she, too, had a good deal to say in favor of the special school for handicapped children. She said that if special classes were maintained in normal schools the pupils in these special classes should be grouped according to their social needs. Big children should be grouped with big children, small children with small. She said that school spirit was more effective in a special school. That the special school need not be so called to the public, but just be another school. There are outstanding teachers, she concluded, in many special classes, who cannot fight against the school conditions. In a special school there is a chance for the handicapped child to excel, to lead, to gain honor. (So, Colleagues, from all this we may conclude that experts in the field of special education are in favor of schools for deaf children, rather than classes for deaf children in ordinary schools.)

The Second Special Education Meeting was interesting, but unfortunately only one of the speakers was present to read her own paper. That was Miss Grace Ball, Supervisor of Special Education in Pasadena, Calif. She too was in favor of segregation. She made a plea for gifted children, and said they were much better off in a school by themselves. Miss Marion Clark, who had a paper on lip-reading, and who is well known to most of us, had been called home, and her paper was read by another lady. It was a good paper, however, and we were listening with both ears, Colleagues, when in through the door walked four members of the American Brotherhood of Supes! Naturally, the attention of this teacher of the deaf wavered, wobbled, and was glued on those four Supes for the rest of the meeting! A paper on activities was read next, but I was busy with my own little activity, a mental arithmetic problem, counting up how many Jobs for Teachers of the Deaf those four Supes held in the hollow of their hands. I stared at them open mouthed.

A business meeting followed, but luckily for me the four Supes had departed by that time, and I was able to listen and vote. Miss Marion Clark was elected president for next year.

I'd like to tell you about the Seth Parker broadcast, and Congresswoman Nourse Rogers, and the personality-plus waitress

time did he require, and how much of the task did he accomplish within the required limit? Does he give wholly foolish and irrelevant answers to problems without attempting to think them through, or does he really try to reason out the solution? If his answer is wrong, how far wrong is it?

The foregoing indicate only a few of the qualitative aspects of mental measurement which may be interpreted by the trained clinical psychologist. Thus, while it may be impossible to use intelligence tests quantitatively with deaf-blind subjects, valuable information can be secured from their qualitative reactions. It is not recommended, of course, that deaf-blind children who have been allowed to vegetate because of the neglect of ignorant or misguided parents, be subjected to any sort of psychological measurement until they have had an opportunity to gain some experience in a normal environment.

The procedure followed in administering tests to the deaf-blind has been discussed at some length by the writer in another article.[1] Variations are necessary to fit the particular type of case under consideration. Thus, some deaf-blind individuals communicate only by means of the manual alphabet, while others can interpret speech through tactual sensation of vibrations. In general the following points may be mentioned as especially important.

(1) Be sure that the testing is done by, or under the supervision of, a thoroughly competent clinical psychologist.

(2) It would be advantageous if the psychologist could become well acquainted with the subject some time before the test is to be given in order to gain his confidence.

(3) If the subject has a special teacher whom he trusts and who understands him thoroughly, it is well to have this teacher help in the examination by acting as interpreter, provided that *no direct assistance* in performing the tests is given.

(4) *Be absolutely certain* that the subject understands exactly what he is required to do, otherwise the interpretation of his reactions may be unfair.

(5) In making any sort of diagnosis or recommendation, always consider the subject's personal and family history, the cause of his handicaps, his educational opportunities, and any other data which may have a possible bearing upon his ability.

There seems to be no good reason why the judicious use of intelligence tests by properly qualified persons should not be a valuable aid in increasing the effectiveness of instruction of deaf-blind pupils. It is to be regretted that teachers sometimes resent the use of objective methods and refuse to be guided by recommendations which have been made after careful consideration. If a subject shows conclusively that he possesses only a seven or eight-year-old vocabulary it is unreasonable to expect him to do Junior High School work even if his chronological age warrants his placement there. It is natural for the teacher to feel that she understands the potentialities of her pupil better than anyone else (scientific methods to the contrary notwithstanding), but she should be willing to accept any information which will indicate his special needs and enable her to modify her methods accordingly. Educating the deaf-blind is a slow and tedious process at best and no means of promoting its efficiency should be cast aside merely because of prejudice or misinformation. Psychological tests *can* be used with those who lack sight and hearing if they are administered by someone with insight, training and experience. If their results are interpreted *qualitatively*, rather than *quantitatively*, and if their findings are accepted in a spirit of cooperation, the instruction of deaf-blind children may be better adapted to individual capacities.

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[1]Merry, R. V., "A Case Study in Deaf-Blindness," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, XXV, July-September, 1930, pp. 133-148.

The Teacher Looks on the Superintendent

By Martha Livingston

THERE was once a member of a silent sisterhood who became vocal outside the intimate circles of her order.

The significance of this statement is apparent when one pauses to reflect upon the great number of sisterhoods and brotherhoods, the members of which are bound together, not by constitutions and initiatory oaths, but by the fact that they share common interests which may not be discussed openly. For instance, there is the order of henpecked husbands, small, to be sure, but well known to the world through its great prototype, Jiggs. There are orders of the men who aggrievedly wear coats in summer; of the men who feel it necessary to restrain, in the presence of women, their bent toward unseemly language; of the women who belong to the "Aren't men queer" group; of the nurses-who-work-under-doctors-who-make-mistakes; of racial groups that conceal beneath an outward "Yes, yes" the sharp "No, no" of the submerged; of standpatters who see destruction in change. Indeed, there are myriad orders of these silent folk, all marked by under-cover rebellion against things as they are.

By what subtle manifestation the members of such groups become known to one another it is difficult to say; but, given contact, there is sure to occur a spark resulting in revelations which may spread far and wide through the group—and rarely farther. So, when I state that the spark touched off within one of these Silent Sisterhoods reached one on the outside, I relate the unusual.

The Vocal One was a teacher of the deaf, one of the type who, in various conclaves all over the country, had listened much and talked little, a procedure which does sometimes revive the almost lost art of meditation. She interested me because I have had contact with other teachers of the deaf, and I have myself been a teacher.

"Do you know," she began, "I don't believe our schools for the deaf will ever amount to much until the Supes are required to take summer courses. They have gone static. They are still thinking in terms of their own training and schoolroom experience, acquired dear knows how many years ago."

"Dear me!" said I. "But, come to think of it, why should the superintendent of a school know the details of teaching? His business is administration, isn't it? He wouldn't get that in one of your summer schools."

"He needs to know a good deal about school room detail, or else to know that he doesn't know," replied the Vocal One. "Because in a residential school the policies of administration make or mar the work. We teachers take summer courses and come back full of ideas from the best teachers of the best schools in the country, ideas that meet our needs and that we know will help our children. Then, half the time, the Supes veto the whole thing, or else so nullify part of it that the rest won't function—all because they don't know what it's all about and nobody dares tell them they are out of date."

"Yes, but—" I ventured, "I thought it was supervising teachers who prescribed details."

"But the supes prescribe the supervising teachers—and circumscribe them," she added. "Any decent S. T. has to be loyal to the supe, you know. I've seen cherished plans nipped a number of times—good ones, too. No, the supe is the key to the situation."

"Well, even so, don't the superintendents go to innumerable conventions and

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